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world governed much more by personal than public motives, the resumption of this affair in all its details, now said to be necessary, should lead to a dismissal of men at present in office, and a resumption of early political friendships. Whether the nation would be better for the change, is, with many, a question of difficulty, and with not a few, most easy to be answered.

We fear indeed that it is not on the agency of either Parliamentary party, the people need depend for a restitution of national rights, or that the Catholics can hope for their particular share in the constitution. The former are pretty well convinced of this truth, but the latter appear to doubt of it, and are flattered by ambitious individuals into a belief that they will, in some time, gain a majority in the House as *at present constituted*. NEVER. Is it possible that they hesitate about explicit declaration in favour of reform, for fear of repelling Mr. Canning, or such constant and consistent friends as Mr. Canning, whom the dice-box of events may to-morrow throw out—the prime minister of Great Britain. Do they keep themselves separate from the political reformers, because they think their own object more attainable? Their object, they will find to be unattainable; and it is only by receiving and giving strength; by identifying themselves with the people, and the cause of the people; by meeting with that people, not as marbles meet in a single point, but as men ought to do who are zealous for a common interest well understood, and freely expressed, it is only by means of a reform in Parliament that the Catholics of Ireland will ever attain their emancipation. They must enter through the great gate of the temple, and not endeavour to insinuate their way through the wicket of party.

BELFAST MAG. NO. LV.

#### CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.*

At the close of an excellent article in the Edinburgh Review of November, 1812, on the rights and duties of the people, I met with the following sentence. "Are examples wanting of such popular courses (adverting to the speeches made on meetings of the people,) taken by approved and regular statesmen? we will not refer to such men as Wilkes and Horne Tooke, though we believe if their principles had been as pure as their manners were refined, and their habits, both of thought and speech, classical, the most severe moralist and correct politician, must have been satisfied." This sentence contains, in its first clause, an invidious and depreciating comparison of such a man as *Horne Tooke* with Wilkes, ingeniously, but insiduously bringing them both to the same level; and in the latter part of the same sentence, as far as we can collect the meaning from a second reading, which we are often obliged to make, from a certain perplexity of style that adheres to these authors, the intention is to impugn the purity of political principle, alike and equally in both these characters. I know not on what grounds they can place these two men in the same class, except upon some such principles of classification as those upon which Linnaeus associated the man, the ape, and the bat. But the truth is, that the Scotch philosophers owe Horne Tooke a grudge, not only for a long life spent in a steady and consistent patriotism, "which" as he said himself, "neither friends nor foes; nor life nor death, nor thunder nor lightning made to yield or give way the breadth of a single hair," and which *perverse* purpose of his was certainly beyond their comprehension, who go in or go out with a party; but they also reluctantly raise their eyes to the eminence of Mr. Tooke's philosophical attainments, and strive to repel as they can (now he is in his grave,) his sarcastic criticisms on the circumspect liberality, and parsimonious literature of North-Britain. From what motive indeed, but of vindictive spleen, the Edinburgh Review could place the author of "*Epea Pteroenta*," and the adequate antagonist of Junius, at the side of the writer of the North-Briton, and

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chamberlain of the city of London, he who would place Thomas Ruddiman on the same line with George Buchanan, and match the rudiments and rudeness of the one, with the learning and liberality of the other; he alone can ascertain the *are-tometer* which the Edinburgh reviewers make use of in determining the comparative merits of men.

Edmund Burke, (whom Linnæus certainly would have classed among the *amphibia*.) appears to be the great apostle in the eyes of the Edinburgh Reviewers. We do not presume to ask them for any confession of religious faith, because that matter ought to be exclusively between them and heaven; but it were much to be wished that they would publish a precise, yet comprehensive political creed, which might be carried in the hands or heads of their readers, as a silken thread to guide them safely back, when bewildered in their circuitous walks through the wilderness of the Scotch Political Philosophy.

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*To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.*

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The expedients resorted to by the adherents of administration at present, to obtain signatures to the petitions against the Catholic claims, exceed in variety and means any thing which has hitherto occurred in the history of ministerial intrigue. In counties which they know are generally friendly to the measure, the population or respectability of which they are conscious would rather promote petitions in favour of Catholic emancipation, than support those against it, they are careful not to convene in public meetings, lest the good sense of the people might have the opportunity of being declared. In the Counties of Down and Antrim in particular they have been extremely busy, in an underhand manner, to employ all such persons, as they conceive to have influence the most remote, over the weak, the ignorant, and uninformed. Wherever landlords have influence over their tenants, if such landlords can be moulded to their purposes, they are made the engine to induce their tenants to sign; the fears, the vanities, and the prejudices of persons are laid hold of, who would on any other occasion be held so contemptible, that they would not be consulted, or even spoken to, by those

very men who are now cajoling and intimidating them into signing petitions, which they neither read, and which they would not understand if they heard them read. Different arguments are used by those 'squires, deputy 'squires, and other menial tools, who are too contemptible to be named on paper, to prevail on different persons to sign, who are of the very lowest class in society, both with respect to property and understanding. Great care is taken not to apply to any man of common understanding to sign. There appears to be a degree of timidity in the hawkers of those petitions, to let them be seen by any person who would have sense enough to read or to understand them; the multiplicity of names appears to be the primary object, and no matter whether children, boys, or men; if any school-master can be found ready to enter into their views, as many boys as can write their names, are ordered to sign on the parchment, which with no little pride they are extremely ready to do, as the poor children are happy to have the opportunity of writing their names in presence of his honour; and indeed many grown up persons have been induced to sign from the same motive. One of those hangers on of a certain noble secretary in a neighbouring county, has been extremely active lately in this respectable employment, and in fact in the course of his perambulations has discovered a versatility of talent far surpassing what he was considered to possess; as he has always suited the argument to the mind, or situation of the person to whom he applied. To one he says, "put your name to this parchment, it is to hinder the papists to rise and cut all our throats;" to another, "this is a petition to government, not to raise the papists above the protestants; they have already as much as we have, but their great men want more, and if government complies with their demands, they will immediately overturn the government, establish Popery, and turn us all out of the country;" to another, "I have no enmity to Catholics, I have no kind of objection to the exercise of their religion, but I don't wish them to have political power while they are under the influence of the Pope, nor have I any objection even to grant them what they ask for, provided they give security that they will not take part with the Pope, against our King and government; and this petition goes no farther than to demand

of them security, and sure it is but reasonable to make this demand of them before we grant them power to sit in Parliament, to command our fleets and armies, and to make laws to bind us who are Protestants and Presbyterians." This argument, by the bye, was held out to a man of sense and understanding, with whom his honour came in contact unexpectedly, and who, notwithstanding the speciousness of the arguments, absolutely refused to sign, to the great mortification of the understrapper. To another he says, "the Catholics have got too much already, and if I had my will, they should have been in the same state they were sixty years ago. I would either give them all, or none. If they have a right to any, they have a right to all, but I say they have a right to nothing, and there has been nothing but disturbance in the country since the government foolishly began to grant them liberty." Such have been the arguments held out by this pedlar in petitions to encourage poor misled and benighted persons, to affix their names to a petition, which has for its object the distraction and disunion of the country; for those incendiaries have a double object in view; those petitions are not only to be sent forward to the legislature, as the sense of the Protestant population of the country, in contradiction to Mr. Grattan's assertion, that the Protestant interest was favourable to the Catholic claims, but they also, by this scheme hope to widen the breach between Catholic and Protestant. The former, as they conceive, finding the number of names declared hostile to their interest, will of course look on the Protestants and Presbyterians, not only with an eye of jealousy, but with the principles of revenge rankling in their hearts; and the petitioners from a consciousness of having endeavoured to injure the Catholics, will feel all that rancour and spleen against them which is always the feeling of the injurer towards the injured; by this means the old division, they hope, will be revived, and these jealousies which have so long, unhappily subsisted between Irishmen of different religions, will still be perpetuated, so as to render the country an easy prey to the placemen and pensioners, by whom it has been, and is governed.

As to the first principle, no doubt but they will fully succeed, and that those wretched petitions from the very lowest

of the lowest of the human race, will be laid hold of by administration, as declaratory of the Protestant interest in Ireland, and as a pretext for deferring that act of justice and sound policy, which so vitally concerns the interest of the empire; but as to the latter, they are most miserably deceived, for though the means they have taken to procure signatures to these petitions, and the kind of names they have at these petitions, may be unknown to the persons to whom they are presented, yet the whole is well known to the Catholic body, and to every friend to their cause. They well know that many of the names are nominal, many, those of children, some of beggars, and any of them which are real names of men of any substance, are merely the few of those who are always ready to worship at the word of any man whom their weak fancies may dignify with the title of a great man, and such reptiles are the growth of all countries, and a few of them may be found in every neighbourhood. No, they have missed their aim in the latter respect. It is not unknown to the Catholic body, that Protestant property, Protestant talent, and Protestant respectability, are all with them, and that any who may pretend to any of the above, and are hostile to the reinstatement of four millions of Irishmen to their rights, are merely those who enjoy the sunshine of court favour, or are looking up to the minions of the court for a share of the plunder, which is levying off the country both Protestant and Catholic. Men who would with the same avidity petition against the legitimate claims of their Protestant brethren, were they in expectation of receiving the same wages for it; nay more, men who were their principals to order them, would use the same industry and assiduity to obtain signatures to petitions, praying for even Catholic emancipation itself; in a word, men whose principle is profit, and whose profit is their principle.

Thank heaven, Gentlemen, the eyes of Irishmen are opened, both of Catholic and Protestant; and it is beyond the power of the tools of corruption to set them again together by the ears; people are now convinced, that men may live in harmony and good neighbourhood, and yet each worship his God in his own way; the world is too wise now to suppose that any sect of the religion of Christ, authorises murder, robbery,

or treachery; and that because a man is a Catholic, he is not fit to be trusted; too many have had the happy and grateful experience, that honour, truth, probity and love, are the inmates of Irish bosoms, whether of the Protestant or Catholic persuasion. Too many are also convinced that the slavery of Irishmen is too much in common, and that the Catholic, lacks little of what the Protestant can boast; for them to succeed in their nefarious designs of creating disunion, and distrust among the informed Catholics and Protestants. That there should be any difference in political rights, on account of religious opinion, no man of common sense, of common honesty will assert. There has been too much spoken and written on that subject, for any, the most common observer, to entertain a doubt, and as all such distinctions should be removed, and the Catholics set on the same footing with their neighbours of another faith. But what would then be gained? a feather, and no more, for without a complete and radical reform in the representation of the people, all would be vain and nugatory.

As to the weakness and wretched ignorance of those who are acted upon by the arguments adduced by the petition-hawkers, a few instances will fully prove; one person being asked what was expressed in the petition, said "he did not know, it was read to him in the fields, and it was a *blustry* day, and he could not hear what his honour said." The same person when he was put in mind by a neighbour that he had once solemnly pledged himself to forward a brotherhood of affection among Irishmen of every religious opinion, and to obtain a full and equal representation of all the people in Parliament, and that signing such a petition was a violation of that obligation; he with some apparent compunction, made answer, that "he thought it the same as a County election, where he must obey his landlord; and that if he ordered him to vote for ....., the idiot, he would do so." Another told the little great man that he "would sign for him every morning before he got his breakfast for three months, that, or any other petition he might ask him to put his name to." Another being asked if he read the petition, answered, "he had not, for he saw nothing to read but a list of names." This was fact in many places,

even in this town; for they did not give themselves the trouble of writing copies of the petition on the different parchments handing about blank pieces for the people to sign. These were stitched together, and thus they had the means to fix at the head any kind of petition they thought proper; this was very unlike the manner in which the Protestant petition was signed last year, where every person annexed his business or calling to his name.

I am, Gentlemen, yours truly,  
THEOCRITUS.

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*To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.*

In your last number you have given a long article under the title of "Retrospect of Politics," wherein you again introduce that hackneyed theme which has been so very many years a favourite of many men with pure intentions, as also of men miscalled patriots, I mean *Parliamentary Reform*, or an alteration (for it would not be either a reform or improvement,) in the manner of electing the representatives of the people, which you please. I do not know a political subject which has so long engaged public attention, upon which so much has been said and written, and that by some very able men, without coming to any conclusion, or producing any system that has met even partial approbation; many plans have been suggested, but not one appeared even to approach perfection; the late John Horne Tooke, the Duke of Richmond, and Mr. Pitt, when acting in conjunction, could not perfect even a plausible remedy for the alleged imperfection; my wonder has been long upheld and astonishment often excited, by observing so many men of abilities, reflection, and judgment persevere in employing their talents to effect what clearly appears an utter impossibility; this declaration may make Major Cartwright, Mr. Cobbett, and others stare, but I think it easily demonstrable, and I do not know of any political subject which has so long kept possession of the public mind, that appears so complete a will-o'-the-wisp, such a groundless phantom as *Parliamentary Reform*. Words without any rational meaning, and yet so often repeated or reiterated by men of information and abilities. To support this position let us view the most intimate and contiguous objects, and inquire how much

more politically pure is the member for Derry, or for Downpatrick, than the one for Dundaik, or the members for the County of Antrim, than those for Coleraine, Belfast, or Lisburn. The County of Louth returns in all, three members, the County of Down four, Antrim five, including Carrickfergus; view these now returned, and say would they as political men be more pure if they were all returned by the Counties at large; I am afraid they would not; the mode of their return would not, alter their political principles or rather interests, and when this was clearly seen by many of the theorists, advocates for Parliamentary Reform, they deserted the cause which they found would be both impracticable and useless. The qualification of voters is of little or no importance, whether the members shall be elected by freeholders as now constituted, or whether the qualification for voting shall be diminished or extended even to universal suffrage, you may have the members returned to the House of Commons in any manner you please, whilst the British minister has the boundless patronage created by the expenditure of eighty millions a year of the public money, with recommendations, at least to the Peerage.

But suppose the close boroughs, which have been held forth by many as the source of our political misfortunes, (I think erroneously,) were annihilated, and the members returned by the counties at large, you would only hand the members now returned for boroughs over to the land proprietors, and as the mode of election would not purify the elected, I never again desire to hear the words *Parliamentary Reform*, until a plan shall be promulgated which shall effectually cut off all communication or the possibility of any participation in the loaves and fishes, or in the Peerage, by the members of the House of Commons; until this can be effected, I would have the idea of a Parliamentary Reform completely discharged from the public mind as absurd, impracticable and useless.

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To allow discussion to all, however they may differ from us, we readily admit insertion to the foregoing article; nothing in it lessens the propriety of inculcating par-

liamentary Reform. It is true, Wm. Pitt, and the late Duke of Richmond never matured their plans. Probably they were never sincere in the cause. Certainly they immediately deserted it on becoming ministers. Horne Tooke never had the means of realising his schemes. A corrupt, ungrateful, and fickle people withdrew their support. The advocates of power present a compact phalanx against reform, and are drilled into unity of design, while the advocates for it acting only in a desultory independent manner, lose much of the effect to be obtained from joint efforts. One strong hold of anti-reformers, is to object to the plan proposed, let it be what it may, and insiduously recommend a different one, against which, others, and even themselves, in another turn, are equally ready to object. By such Protean machinations the cause of the people is often defeated, and to this defeat, the people themselves are frequently accessory by their own timidity and sycophancy, and thus Parliamentary Reform, and economical reform are in turn proposed by persons, who frequently are not sincere in their wishes for either.

That the Counties of Antrim and Down stand disgraced by their present representation is not denied. The people are to blame, who sell their birthright to please their landlords. The sentiment that the people have themselves principally to blame for most of the existing evils, is one which has been frequently repeated in our Retrospects. A corrupt people, and a corrupt government produce a mutual re-action on each other. The people foolishly attempt to shift the whole blame on their rulers, and the opponents of reform gladly embrace the opportunity to rebut the arguments of reformers, by an appeal to prove that the people, by their apathy, and exclusive self-interest are "rotten at the core," a fact which, it is feared, cannot be completely refuted, yet it is well to try to restore soundness. If the energies of the people, rulers, and ruled, were directed to restore purity, instead of, as now, upholding corruption, a most important change would take place, as great as if an additional sense were added to our present physical powers.

B.M.M.